



A PARISH COUNCIL FOR WINCHELSEA

A response to the 'Silent Majority'

Dear Resident

You may have received a letter signed by "Silent Majority of Winchelsea". Notwithstanding that this is an anonymous letter, let me address the point raised.

The idea that I am the only one in Winchelsea who does anything might be flattering but is quite untrue and patronises the other residents of the Town. I may have taken a lead in re-opening the Little Shop and Post Office, but following my resignation from these organisations, other residents have stepped forward to take charge. It is also worth looking around at the amazing number of clubs, societies and voluntary organisations in the Town. There are over 30: quite a number for such a small place. By way of information, the Town Plan Steering Committee remains at full strength and the Working Groups were wound down having successfully completed their work. It is news that over half the members have resigned!

The fact is that, when something is regarded as important to the Town, residents will help. Only when organisations or events become stale and irrelevant (eg Icklesham Parish Council) does interest dwindle.

The argument that Winchelsea should not have its own parish council because of the possibility that the Town may not be able to field enough Councillors reflects apathy and a basic lack of faith in democracy. It is also telling that this fear of the future is the only argument that has been offered against the proposal for a Winchelsea Parish Council and it avoids all the other vital issues.

There is little need to fear that Winchelsea will not be able to field enough candidates for its own Parish Council. Is "Silent Majority" really suggesting that Winchelsea, with its proud traditions and strong sense of identity, could not do what has been done for years by the smaller parishes of Mountfield, Iden, Udimore, Brightling, Ashburnham, Bodiam, Dallington, Rye Foreign, Whatlington and Playden?

And interest in local democracy would be revived by creating a parish with which the Town can identify and which would actually get something done. There is evidence of this already: 10 residents have expressed interest in being a Winchelsea councillor (and that does not count those who are opposed to the idea but would no doubt wish to be represented if the proposal goes ahead). And where did "Silent Majority" get the idea that Parish Council Chairman is a full-time job?

The argument that Winchelsea is able to rely on other wards to provide Councillors is flatly contradicted by the facts. In the last three Parish Council elections, only three wards have had contested elections: Winchelsea (twice) and Rye Harbour (and the contested election in Rye Harbour was caused by a Winchelsea resident trying his luck in Rye Harbour). Other than Winchelsea, the wards of Icklesham Parish have usually had to co-opt people to fill their vacancies (seven of the current 13 have been co-opted and Rye Harbour has had to co-opt someone from Rye). **How would the other wards be able to provide Councillors for Winchelsea if they cannot provide enough for themselves?**

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Parish of Winchelsea Action Group